

Workforce Observations

For The North Central WDA

May, 2002



Small Improvements In The Employment Picture In April

The many seasonal factors that play important roles in the employment picture of our area are different in winter than they are in summer. From about the late fall until the last snow has all but disappeared from everywhere except the deep woods and the slopes of Rib Mountain, levels of employment in every sector decline in answer to the influence of the colder weather. It takes just a while for the effects of the warmer weather to be felt in any of the labor markets of the state. The arrival of summer weather and the disappearance of the snow and ice is only the beginning what will be an improvement in the job situation around the River Valley.

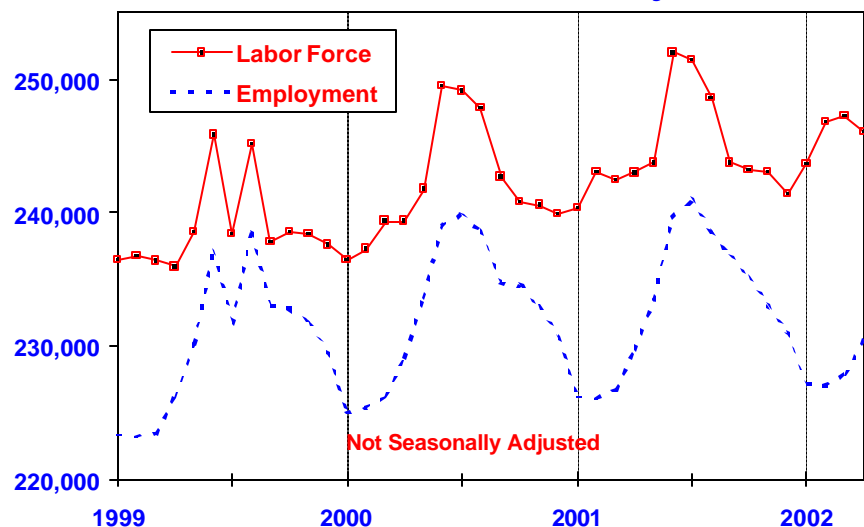
April may be said to be the first month of spring, if that is when we expect to say any increase, however slight, in the number of jobs in our area. And indeed, April of 2002 is no different than most Aprils of years past. How has this annual improvement manifested in the different areas of the Valley?

Employment Picture Mixed

The rate of unemployment declined in every Valley county in the month of April when compared to the previous month. The drop in some places was not all that significant, amounting to less than a few tenths of a percentage point. However, in Wood County, there was an improvement in the rate to the tune of about 2.4 percent downward, with Adams showing about 1.6 percent compared to March. However, the average unemployment rate for the area as a whole in April was 7.3, well above the state rate of 5.7. (The national rate was exactly the same.) The counties of the north all saw rather high levels of joblessness in the most recent month, the highest being Forest County at about 9.5 percent, followed closely by Langlade at 9.4. Compared to the same period of 12

months ago, the picture is somewhat mixed, with Forest being lower in April of this year than last, but Lincoln gaining a whole percentage point. At first glance, accustomed as we have been to lower unemployment rates for years, the levels of the most recent month seem troublesome. However, it is good to keep in mind that we are in the midst of something of an economic slowdown throughout the region, a response to stagnating national conditions. One of the

**Civilian Labor Force
Wisconsin River Valley**



characteristics of this cooling trend in the economy is that it has been somewhat spotty rather than general, with certain industries slower than others.

For example, manufacturing employment has been strong throughout the winter, showing the customary seasonal effects in employment levels, but it does seem to lack the robustness of the last 3-5 years nonetheless. In the nine county River Valley area, just over 40,000 people were employed in the manufacturing sector. Compared to March and to April of last year, there has been no significant change in this level. Stagnation may be one way to describe this "trend", as negative as that designation has come to be, but one thing to keep in mind is that it is still a bit early in the season and we have many warm months ahead. The time to be looking closely at this sector (page 2, please)

will be June and July. In spite of general lethargy in the national and regional sectors, there is every reason to think that this will be a busy summer in manufacturing.

Looking at other sectors of the industrial picture, small gains can be seen in April compared to March, but as with manufacturing, these are insignificant. The increases compared to the same period of 12

months ago are better, with trade gaining about 2,000 jobs and services just over 1,000. As far as these sectors are concerned, their performance, at least in the northern counties of the District, seems to change greatly as the season progresses. This raises the issue of the coming tourist season. In the next issue of the *Observations* we hope to explore the problems of the on-going labor shortage in the north.



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<http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/>

Mont of April	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Labor Force	8,075	4,985	9,628	15,043	77,261	20,562	38,089	11,366	42,683	227,692
Employed	7,509	4,492	8,646	13,622	72,191	18,721	35,705	10,298	38,962	210,146
Unemployed	566	493	982	1,421	5,070	1,841	2,384	1,068	3,721	17,546
Unemployment rate(%)	7.0	9.9	10.2	9.4	6.6	9.0	6.3	9.4	8.7	7.7%
Total, all industries**	4,040	3,400	7,836	12,042	69,632	17,867	32,565	7,718	45,354	200,454
Construction & Mining	167	85	274	355	2,472	1,238	948	829	1,430	7,798
Manufacturing	409	470	1,655	3,788	17,770	1,996	5,533	430	9,593	41,644
Transportation & Util.	197	248	431	468	4,246	680	2,000	186	3,360	11,816
Wholesale Trade	128	43	349	395	5,156	525	1,512	247	1,460	9,815
Retail Trade	841	456	1,696	2,267	13,445	4,754	6,103	2,078	8,292	39,932
FIRE	92	100	264	732	4,702	434	3,656	281	955	11,216
Services	986	446	1,917	1,913	13,939	5,350	7,092	1,509	14,593	47,745
Government	1,220	1,552	1,250	2,124	7,902	2,890	5,721	2,158	5,671	30,488
Change from previous mo.	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	-216	-83	-75	119	1,115	-424	341	-262	534	1,049
Employed	-335	-95	-142	-77	-65	-583	21	-320	-535	-2,131
Unemployed	119	12	67	196	1,180	159	320	58	1,069	3,180
Unemployment rate(%)	1.6	0.4	0.8	1.2	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.7	2.4	0.1
Total, all industries**	200	130	130	77	180	590	155	143	700	2,305
Construction & Mining	27	49	49	-20	90	251	161	102	153	862
Manufacturing	2	6	6	-35	131	27	-25	-2	68	178
Transportation & Util.	6	8	8	5	14	18	36	7	56	158
Wholesale Trade	14	-3	-3	4	-11	-13	21	4	43	56
Retail Trade	62	2	2	77	109	141	22	20	123	558
FIRE	-2	1	1	3	-19	-9	-22	-16	1	-62
Services	73	41	41	29	-102	94	107	-2	135	416
Government	18	26	26	14	-32	81	-145	30	121	139
Change from year ago	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	-205	287	-276	155	1,639	176	625	180	1,507	4,088
Employed	-407	280	-405	-278	-448	65	-100	35	-128	-1,386
Unemployed	202	7	129	433	2,087	111	725	145	1,635	5,474
Unemployment rate(%)	2.6	-0.4	1.6	2.8	2.7	0.5	1.9	1.1	3.6	0.1
Total, all industries**	-20	259	-166	-208	-327	509	-79	132	357	457
Construction & Mining	-1	-12	-142	-232	-507	38	-234	-77	-330	-1,497
Manufacturing	-14	-42	-117	-344	-995	161	-275	-103	-358	-2,087
Transportation & Util.	23	30	29	15	270	-12	158	-38	67	542
Wholesale Trade	16	-9	-125	-16	137	163	-168	106	77	181
Retail Trade	-10	18	-113	-99	1,122	135	160	302	108	1,623
FIRE	-5	8	12	479	-169	-20	-49	-21	47	282
Services	11	-39	360	51	47	10	-116	-58	748	1,014
Government	-40	305	-70	-62	-232	34	445	21	-2	399

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI
 Direct questions and comments to: **Dennis Goodwin, Labor Market Analyst**
 Marathon County Job Center, 364 Grand Ave., Wausau, WI 54403
 715-261-7745 715-261-7757(FAX) e-mail: goodwd@dwd.state.wi.us